

27
F O U R
S E R M O N S,

O N T H E
Second Coming of Christ,

A N D T H E
Future Misery of the Wicked.

By J. B E N S O N.

L E E D S :

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S E R M O N I.

2 THESS. i. 8, 9.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.

I. **T**HE second coming of our Lord, and the amazing scenes which will then be opened, to the everlasting confusion of his enemies, and the perpetual joy of his saints, are the frequent subjects of holy writ. The Prophets and Apostles, Christ and his Evangelists, speak often and largely of these matters; and though with some variety of phrase and manner of representation, yet without any contradiction. And they all treat them, not as points of mere speculation, the contemplation of which has a tendency to encrease our knowledge, elevate our conceptions, enlarge our views and exalt our minds, (which is doubtless the case) but also and chiefly as discoveries of the utmost importance and concern to us all, which when cordially believed and attentively considered, have (thro' divine grace) the

most happy influence on our temper and conduct. And I have often thought that Christianity would flourish much more than it does among us, if the Ministers of the Gospel imitated in this, their Example, and led both saints and sinners to the more frequent and serious consideration of those events which will soon take place.

2. Would we successfully call sinners to repentance? Like Paul preaching at Athens we should testify, that *God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.* — Would we make the sinners in Zion afraid? Would we wish to see fearfulness surprize the hypocrites? with the Prophet we must demand, *Who can endure devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Would we persuade the delicate and effeminate to self-denial and mortification, to *cut off the right hand and to pluck out the right eye, which offend?* We must, with our Lord, remind them, that it is better one of their members should perish, than that their whole body should be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Would we fortify the timorous against the fear of man, which always bringeth a snare, and often leadeth into sin? We must exhort them in the words of Jesus, *not to fear those who can only kill the body, but rather to fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.*

3. In short, whether we would rouse the careless, or excite the indolent, or reclaim the backslider, or comfort the distressed, or succour the tempted, or encourage the faint-hearted, or animate the faithful soldier of Jesus Christ, patiently to endure hardships, courageously fight his enemies, valiantly conquer the powers of darkness, and seize the crown of everlasting life; — we should bring the Day of Judgement in view, with

with the terrors of hell and the joys of heaven, and fetch our arguments, motives and encouragements thence.—Thus will the *stout-hearted* and *those who are far from righteousness*, tremble, with Felix (who was alarmed at Paul's reasoning concerning a judgement to come,) and enquiring *what must we do to be saved*, will repent and be converted, *that their sins may be blotted out*. And thus will the true believer rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and while for the joy that is set before him he endures the cross and despises the shame, he will give all diligence to be found of Christ at his coming in peace, and without spot and blameless.

4. Since then these are such necessary and fruitful subjects of discourse, and so repeatedly offered to our consideration in the sacred scriptures, it may be profitable for us, frequently to employ our thoughts upon them. That we may do it for a few moments at this time, I have made choice of this most alarming passage of Scripture, in which the Apostle, with a view to their comfort and support under their sufferings, puts the persecuted Church of God at Thessalonica in remembrance of the very different state of things which would soon take place, with regard to them and their persecutors. God (says he) *will recompence tribulation to those who trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who (adds he) shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.*

In these words we have,

- I. The *certainty* and *manner* of our Lord's second coming.
- II. The *character* of them who shall then be the objects of his wrath.
- III. The *nature* and *duration* of the punishment which he will inflict upon them.

These are all very important points, and well deserve our most serious consideration.

I shall confine myself at present to the first of them, *viz.*

- I. The *certainty* and *manner* of our Lord's second coming.

1. As to the *certainty* of his second coming, they who read and credit the Oracles of God, can entertain no doubt at all concerning it. It is there foretold and described so frequently and clearly, and with such variety of method and expression, that the most careless reader can hardly avoid observing and understanding it. If therefore I produce some Scripture-testimonies of this Truth, it is not so much with a view to illustrate and confirm it, as to impress so useful a subject more deeply upon our minds. For it is too manifest, that it may be believed and understood, where it has, by no means, its proper influence.

2. I observe then, that this event was foretold by the ancient Prophets as well as by Christ and his Apostles. Even *Enoch* of old prophesied, saying, *Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute judgement upon all.* A truth this of which the Psalmist was not ignorant, for in the 50th Psalm, he testifies, "*Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before*

before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him: he shall call the heavens from above and the earth, that he may judge his people. These predictions, so clear and express that their sense must be obvious to all, are confirmed and illustrated by the testimony of Daniel, chap. vii. ver. 9. 10. *I beheld (says he) till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgement was set, and the books were opened!* What a sublime and inimitably grand description have we here, mix'd with admirable simplicity! How far does it exceed, in these respects, every thing to be met with in merely human compositions! How plainly does it appear to have been the effect, not of genius and art, but of a mind, thro' the influences of the divine spirit, elevated with the grandeur, awed with the majesty, and struck with the terror of the subject!

3. These ancient prophecies of our Lord's second coming have the sanction of his own authority, not only as being inspired by him, but as being confirmed by most express declarations, delivered by himself, as well while upon earth as after his ascension into heaven, and that both before friends and enemies. I shall produce only two or three of these as a specimen of the rest. Thus when Caiaphas, the Elders and Scribes, had the boldness, or presumptuous wickedness rather, to call their Creator and final Judge to take his trial at their tribunal; before these he testified, *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* To his friends and followers, he

he often foretold the same event, tho' with a different view, not merely to convince and alarm, but also and especially to comfort and encourage them. Thus, when predicting and describing the destruction of Jerusalem, and the ruin of the Jewish church and polity, he slides (as it were) insensibly into this important subject typified by that, declaring, *After the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: then shall all tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* And in the next chapter, (Matt. xxv.) which, it seems, contains the last public discourse our Lord delivered before he was offered up, he declares to all, *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations.*

4. To these express and particular declarations delivered by our Lord, while he tabernacled upon earth in his state of humiliation, we may subjoin his testimony from heaven, after he entered upon his state of exaltation, and was invested with all power in heaven and on earth. The faithful and true witness, the Alpha and Omega, when he takes his solemn leave of us, in the conclusion of the records of truth, testifies, both to friends and foes, *Behold, I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* And again, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every man according as his work shall be.* And yet again; *He that testifieth these things, saith, "Surely I come quickly."* To which the church replies, *Amen; so come, Lord Jesus.* Thus by three testimonies from the lips of

of Eternal Veracity, is this glorious truth established.

5. But that a doctrine so superior to reason and yet absolutely certain and deeply interesting, might want no kind of evidence calculated to gain it credit, messengers were sent immediately from heaven to bear witness to it. Thus when our Lord had given his Apostles their last commission, and while they beheld was taken up from them, a cloud receiving him out of their sight; while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come again in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven."

6. This testimony of the holy Angels, or of the spirits of the Just made perfect, is frequently confirmed by that of the Holy Spirit in the mouths of the Apostles. But as I would not be tedious, I forbear to quote any particular passages, chusing rather to refer you to their sermons, as recorded by St. Luke in the Acts, and to their various epistles, where you frequently meet with many glorious descriptions of this grand event. The testimonies already produced are more than sufficient, not only to establish us in the firm belief of this comfortable truth, but also (which is most wanting) to impress it deeply upon our minds. Good reason have we to settle it in our hearts, that as our Lord is gone before to prepare a place for us, so he will come again to receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also; that to those who look for him he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Yes,

" At

“ At the destined period shall return

“ He, once on earth, who bled for human guilt,

“ And with him all our triumph o’er the tomb.”

For then will he change our vile bodies and render them like unto his glorious body. Then will he be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe.

7. Let us rest assured then, tho’ the vision is for an appointed time, yet in the end it shall speak and shall not lie. When the exact period shall arrive indeed we know not, nor can we expect to know, since (as our Lord assures us) it is kept a secret not only from all the men upon earth, but likewise from all the angels in heaven. But this we know, it will only be deferr’d till the mystery of God shall be finish’d; till the prophecies shall be all fulfill’d, and a sufficient number redeem’d from among men.—*If therefore any scoffers arise in these last days, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for ever since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were: we reply, One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. No time is long or short with him who is Eternal: He can do the work of a thousand years in one day, and a thousand years, nay, the longest time, is no delay to him. He is not therefore slow concerning his promise of coming again, tho’ some men count it slowness, but he is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but rather that all should come to repentance.*

8. But the day of the Lord will come, and when it comes it will come suddenly and unexpectedly, as a thief in the night, so that when men shall say “ peace and safety,” then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. For behold (says Jesus) I come as a thief at unawares, and at such an hour as

ye think not the Son of Man cometh.—Blessed is he, therefore, that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. Watch ye, therefore, for we know not at what hour our Lord doth come. For if we will not watch, he will come as a thief, and we shall not know what hour he will come upon us. If, like the evil servant, we say in our heart, Our Lord delayeth his coming, and begin to smite our fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, our Lord shall come in a day when we look not for him, and in an hour that we are not aware of, and will cut us asunder, and appoint us our portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The certainty of our Lord's second coming (which, it seems, will not be long deferred, and whenever it is, will be sudden and unexpected, even as the lightening cometh out of the East and in an instant shineth unto the West) I say, the certainty of his coming again being evident beyond contradiction or dispute to all who credit the holy Scriptures, I proceed, as was proposed, to enquire further into the manner of his coming, according to the representation given of it in our text. For this too is doubtless a subject of enquiry well worthy the attention of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to whom nothing that particularly concerns him will appear trivial or unimportant.

Consider we then,

Secondly, In what form, with what attendants, and in what circumstances he will appear?

1. Will God's Eternal Son again for our sakes divest himself of his glory, relinquish his felicity, assume our nature and suffer in our stead? Be-
ing

ing *made flesh*, will the Creator of all again become destitute of every earthly accommodation, so as not even to *have a place where to lay his head*, tho' the very foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests? Will he again endure hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, weariness and hardship of every kind? Will the sovereign Lord of the Universe, and the final Judge of Angels and of Men, again suffer himself to be apprehended by his creatures, arraign'd, tried and condemned; to be insulted, spit upon, scourged and crucified? Will the ever-blessed Jesus again groan under a mountain of guilt, and sustain the wrath of incensed justice, till he is constrain'd to confess, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, and sweats, as it were, great drops of blood?* In short, will the Prince of Life, and the Light of the World again suffer the pang of death, and go out in darkness?

2. Oh, no! These days of his humiliation and sorrow are past, and will return no more. For having vanquish'd his and our enemies upon the cross, and led them in triumph at his chariot wheels when he ascended far above all heavens, in reward of his victorious sufferings, he is invested with power and dominion irresistible and eternal, and is raised to a throne of glory at the Father's right-hand. Because when *he was in the form of God, he emptied himself of his honour and happiness, taking the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men; and being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those in earth, and those under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to*
the

the Glory of God the Father. And now he reigns in bliss and glory independent and supreme, sovereign of angels and of men, King of kings, and Lord of lords. The government of the universe rests upon his shoulders, and all persons and things are at his disposal and under his direction.

3. This dignity and glory of our exalted Lord is, however, hid from the world; and hence their disobedience to his commands, contempt of his authority, and neglect of his salvation. But at his second coming he shall be manifested and discovered in all his excellent majesty and divine perfections, and therefore it is called the *revelation* of Jesus Christ. For then it will be revealed, to the eternal confusion of his foes, and the perpetual joy of his redeemed, what he is and will for ever be. Then will he blaze forth

“ In all the splendour of the Deity
 “ Darken the sun, confound the brightest star,
 “ His Father’s image perfectly expressit,
 “ The nations then shall own him for their God,
 “ And the whole world confess th’ almighty Judge.”

Then will it be seen whom they insulted and reviled, when they said, “ Hail, King of the Jews,” and “ He saved others, himself he cannot save.” Then will it appear for whose blood they clamoured, when they cried out, “ Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him.” Then will Pilate see who it was that he condemned to die, and Caiphas whom he charged with blasphemy. Yea, then will the whole race of impenitent transgressors acknowledge, however reluctant, the dignity and power of that man, whom they refused to reign over them. For then will he be revealed as *the effulgence of his Father’s*

ther's glory, and the express image of his person, even as God over all, blessed for ever, possessed of infinite and unlimited authority, and all possible perfections !

—— “ Ah, how unlike
 “ The Babe of Bethleem ! how unlike the man
 “ That groan'd on Calvary ! Yet he it is
 “ That man of sorrows ! Ah, how chang'd ! ”

4. Concerning this matter we can have no doubt at all, the Scripture is so full and express upon the head. The passages above quoted, and which I need not here repeat, are a sufficient confirmation of it. Our Lord there speaks of *his sitting on the right-hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven* ; and again of *his coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory* ; and yet again of *his coming in his glory with all his holy angels with him, when he will sit upon the throne of his glory*. I shall only add here, just such was the representation St. John had of his second coming, when he *saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written which no man knoweth but himself. and he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

5. What a glorious discovery was here afforded the Apostle ! What a grand and most sublime description

description does he give us ! What an august personage is here represented to our view ! But, ah ! how much more will the representation strike us when it is made by Christ in person, and we shall see him as he is !—Shall see heaven open, and the Son of God in the pomp of Majesty ineffable descending !—Shall see,

- “ On an empyreal, flying throne,
- “ Awfully rais’d, heaven’s everlasting Son !
- “ Virtue, dominion, praise, omnipotence
- “ Support the train of their triumphant Prince ;
- “ Night shades the solemn arches of his brows,
- “ And on his cheek the purple morning glows.”

And now what is all the fulsome pride of human greatness, and the affected pomp which decorates worms of the earth, to this inherent dignity and ineffable majesty of the glorious Redeemer ! Ah, how does this refulgent Sun of Righteousness, thus beaming forth in his meridian glory, eclipse all the borrow’d brightness of feeble mortals ! Surely all the renown’d Statesmen, victorious Generals, famed Conquerors, powerful Emperors, and mighty Monarchs which have ever dignified the annals of human history, and shone with faint rays during the dreary night of this world, shall disappear in the presence of this God of Glory, when at the morning of the resurrection, the day of Eternity dawns upon us, just as the stars vanish before the rising sun ! Ah ! how will all the *Kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men*, be then ashamed of that vain grandeur, on account of which they valued themselves, and confounded at their foolish and unreasonable pride, while they who pierced him, and neglected his great salvation, shall wail because of him !

6. But further. To give us a still clearer view of the dignity of our exalted Saviour, and the glory of his second coming, besides his *personal* excellencies and divine majesty, which will be then fully display'd, his *attendants* are likewise mentioned in our text, and in other parts of Scripture, and therefore should not be passed over in silence, for they will yet more illustrate that glorious day of his triumph.—We have already seen how he shall be *revealed from heaven, which shall* (as it were) unfold its crystal ports, or cleave its starry plains asunder, and discover instantly to our view a *great white throne and him who sits upon it, from whose face heaven and earth flee away, and there is no place found for them*, and at the sight of whom, consternation, terror and dismay shall overwhelm the ungodly, and eternally extinguish every gleam of comfort and ray of hope. But the Apostle further tells us in our text, that he shall be attended with his *mighty Angels*, a circumstance which is attested by our Lord himself in the predictions he gave while upon earth of his second coming (as quoted above) and which he likewise included in the representation of that event made to his servants Daniel and John. The latter of whom tells us, he saw *the armies of heaven following him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean*; and the former beheld *thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him*. What a glorious retinue have we here! How different from the twelve poor fisher-men who attended, (shall I say?) or rather deserted him in his days of humiliation! Ah me! in how different a character, and in what different circumstances, does the Saviour now appear!

“ How

"How changed from him who meekly prostrate laid,
 "Vouchsafed to wash the feet himself had made;
 "From him who was forsook, betrayed, denied;
 "Who languish'd, pray'd, bled, thirsted, groaned,
 and died;
 "Hung, pierc'd and bare, insulted by the foe,
 "All heaven in tears above, earth unconcerned below."

7. These his holy angels will not only accompany him as attendants upon his person, to manifest his divine power and authority, and to display his royal grandeur and magnificence, but likewise as ministers of his will, to execute his purposes of love to his people and of wrath to his enemies. These, as harbingers of his glory, shall prepare the way before him, and make ready for the appearance of the Universal Judge! *I saw* (says the Apostle John) *a mighty Angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rain-bow was upon his head, and his face was (as it were) the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth, and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And he lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and earth and the sea, that there should be time no longer; but the mystery of God should be finished, as he had declared to his servants the Prophets.*

And now before,

"In grandeur terrible all heaven descend,
 "A swift archangel with his golden wing,
 "As clouds and blots, that darken and disgrace
 "The scene divine, sweeps stars and suns aside:
 "And thus, all dross removed, heaven's own pure day
 "Full on the confines of our Ether flames."

8. Preparation being thus made, the Son of Man appears in his glory and all his holy angels with him. And now he sends these his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from one end of heaven to the other. And as they are employed, as the instruments of his good-will and condescending grace to his redeemed, whom they will separate from the world, and gather as wheat into his garner; so likewise shall they be the ministers of his vengeance to the wicked, whom at the time of the general harvest, they shall gather together like tares, and bind in bundles to burn them. Yes, at the end of the world, the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

9. Another circumstance mentioned in our text attending our Lord's second coming (and the last I shall now take notice of) is, that he shall be revealed in flaming fire. This particular was also represented to Daniel, in that prophetic vision which God gave him of this grand event. He saw (as he tells us) his throne like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire, while a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him.—As of old the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrha, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of those cities, and that which grew upon the ground, so at the consummation of all things, when he arises to shake terribly the earth, with that fiery stream which issues and comes forth from before him, he will burn up the earth with its increase, and melt down the foundations of the mountains; yea, a fire shall be kindled

kindled in his anger, which shall burn to the nethermost hell, shall burn and shall not be quenched.—We know that the heavens and the earth which now are, are by the word of God kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men. And when that period arrives, while the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth and all its works shall be totally burnt up.

— “ At that destined hour,
 “ By the loud trumpet summon’d to the charge,
 “ See all the formidable sons of fire,
 “ Eruptions, earthquakes, comets, lightnings, play
 “ Their various engines; all at once disgorge
 “ Their blazing magazines, and take by storm
 “ This poor, terrestrial citadel of man.”

10. To add the greater terror to this most terrible period, the Scriptures represent it as happening at midnight.—*At midnight* (says Jesus) *there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.* And perhaps the Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, intimates the same, where he says, *Of the times and seasons ye have no need that I should write unto you, for ye yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*—’Tis true, this cannot be the case with respect to the whole earth, it being always day in one part or other of it: But it may be the case with regard to those parts of the earth which are most inhabited, and have been most favoured with the light of the Gospel. Whatever happens to the deserts of America in the West, the unenlighten’d Indies in the East, and the immense Pacific Ocean lying between them, tho’ it should be broad day *there*; yet it may be night at our Lord’s second coming with respect to the most populous and considerable parts

parts of the earth ; I mean Europe, Asia, Africa, and the eastern parts of America. The inhabitants of those parts may be enveloped with the dismal shades of darkness, when this awful day instantly blazes forth. So it seems our Poet, whose sentiments on this subject are always as just as they are striking, and whom, therefore, I can hardly quote too often, supposed when he said

“ At midnight, when mankind are wrapt in peace,
 “ And worldly fancy feeds on golden dreams ;
 “ At midnight, ’tis presumed, this scene will burst
 “ From tenfold darkness, sudden as the spark
 “ From smitten steel, from nitrous grain the blaze ;
 “ Man starting from his couch shall sleep no more.”

II. Then, as was represented to St. John, *shall there be a great earthquake, and the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become as blood, and the stars of heaven shall fall unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island shall be moved out of their place : And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, “ Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand.”* Who, indeed, when

“ Above, beneath, around, amazement all !
 “ Terror and glory join’d in their extremes,
 “ Our God in grandeur, and our world on fire !”

12. And

12. And now let us turn aside and see this great sight. Let us stand still and consider this solemn scene here opened to our view! By the help of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, let us contemplate the awful majesty and terrible grandeur of that day, if our weak senses can endure the dreadful glory of it's light, or our feeble faculties sustain the effulgence of its over-powering brightness and astonishing terrors.—Ah! how must it surprize and alarm the secure sinner, and how must it strike all men with amazement and awe, in the dead of night, to be suddenly awaked out of the repose of their last sleep, by the confused noise and deafening roar of trumpets sounding, thunders grumbling, stars rushing, elements melting, waves dashing, the sea tossing, and the earth quaking! Ah! how will the stoutest heart fail for fear, and sink with horrible dread, to hear the sudden crush of worlds, and behold the wreck of universal nature!

To see

—“ Each mountain height

“ Outburn Vesuvius; rocks eternal pour

“ Their melted mass, as rivers once they pour'd;

“ Stars rush, and final ruin fiercely drive

“ Her plowshare o'er creation.”

How will the stubborn infidel, who treated these discoveries as the inventions of fancy, and the harden'd sinner, who despised and neglected them; ah! how will they start from the slumbers of midnight, the bed of debauching pleasures, or the couch of riot and revelling excess, in wild affright and disorder, when they shall be obliged to behold with their eyes (and that by dismal light!) and feel, to their sorrow, what they would not once believe, or wilfully forgot! Now they can disbelieve and forget no longer. The great and terrible day of the Lord is arrived.

“ The

" The fatal period, the great hour is come,
 " And nature shrinks at her approaching doom;
 " Loud peals of thunder give the sign, and all
 " His terrors in array surround the ball:
 " Sharp lightnings with the meteors blaze conspire,
 " And darting downward set the world on fire."

Now the day is actually come which burns as an oven, and all the proud (all infidels) and all that do wickedly (all impenitent sinners) shall be as stubble: the day is come that shall burn them up, and leave them neither root nor branch.

13. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm in the holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and of gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness! Jesus descends with his holy angels; a fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth. For behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof! The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish! Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are come upon thee, O inhabitant of the land; for the windows from on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth do shake! The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, and is removed like a cottage, for the transgression thereof is heavy upon it, and it falls to rise no more! See, ye blind, the victorious blaze of irresistible and all-conquering fire! It rends the rocks, consumes the forests, melts down the mountains, lays cities, yea whole kingdoms in ashes, and envelops the whole earth! Behold, it rises, swells, spreads, and overwhelms all with an universal deluge. While, in the mean time,

" Blac

" Black rising clouds the thicken'd ether choke,
 " And spiry flames shoot thro' the rolling smoke,
 " With keen vibrations cut the sullen night,
 " And streak the darken'd sky with dreadful light."

Hear, ye deaf, the re-bellowing growl and aggravated roar of hoarse-muttering thunder, the mighty voice of the great archangel, and the all-alarming trump of God ! Feel, ye stout-hearted, the earth quaking and opening, the mountains trembling and removing, the hills reeling and sinking, the valleys heaving and rising ! Feel, or be for ever hardened, the shock of conflicting elements, and the dash of ruined worlds !

14. Awake ! awake ! ye sleepy sinners ! shake off your fatal slumbers ! Arise from the bed of sloth, and the lap of enchanting pleasures ! Haste, haste, and flee for shelter from this day of wrath and unrelenting fury ! If you delay till this day overtake you, then, alas ! whither can you flee ? The earth quakes, trembles, and opens under your feet ; the storm of divine vengeance lowers and bursts upon your guilty heads, and ruin and perdition surround you on every hand ! The frowning Judge, whose just indignation you have provoked, and whose almighty wrath your sins have kindled, fixes his piercing eye upon you, and marks you out as the butt, at which he will shoot his fiery arrows, and direct the thunder-bolts of his everlasting indignation. And now 'tis in vain to cry to the rocks and mountains to fall upon you and hide you ; the rocks and mountains rend and cleave asunder, yea, flee away and leave you destitute and forsaken, exposed to all the artillery of omnipotent fury, and in the midst of dark and fiery torment.

15. *Oh,*

15. *Oh, that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! Oh! that they would lay these things to heart, and take heed lest at any time their hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon them unawares, for as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the earth! Oh, that they would watch and pray always, that they might escape those things which are coming upon the earth, and stand before the Son of Man with joy and not with grief.*

S E R M O N II.

2 THESS. i. 7, 8.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. **I**T being absolutely certain that our Lord will come again, and when he comes, will be revealed in all the glory of his majesty, and in all the terror of his justice; not properly in the character of a *Saviour*, but in that of a *Judge*, to examine into the conduct of all mankind, and pass a final sentence upon them according to their works,—it surely concerns all men to lay these things to heart, and to prepare for his appearing. And it equally concerns us not to defer this business, not only because what is always reasonable and fit to be done, cannot be done too soon; but because a delay may be of the most dangerous consequence, for at *such an hour as we think not, the Son of Man cometh*; and if when he cometh, he find us unprepared, we are undone for ever.

2. And yet (dreadful to say!) almost all mankind live from day to day in entire forgetfulness and total neglect of this matter! While every thing else, however trifling and impertinent, is studiously and eagerly prosecuted, this is almost
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universally disregarded. The toy of business is diligently attended, the phantom of honour unweariedly pursued, the enchantments of pleasure assiduously courted, the dream of amusement solicitously sought; in short, the things of time and sense, tho' transitory in their duration, uncertain in their stay, unsatisfactory in their nature, and even perplexing in their enjoyment; *these* engage the attention and engross the affection of high and low, young and old, rich and poor.—In the mean time, our immortal interests, the favour of our God, and the eternal advantages and pleasures of religion, are generally buried in oblivion and neglected. Unreasonable is this conduct indeed, but too certainly may it be laid to the charge of the generality of mankind, whose whole behaviour clearly demonstrates that they are more intent upon providing for their momentary abode on earth, than their everlasting existence in heaven; and on securing the favour and applause of their fellow-worms, than the good-will and approbation of their final Judge! But in this respect, let not us follow the multitude to do evil, to offend our God and throw away our own souls! Nay rather, thro' grace, let us take care to be those persons whom the Lord will acquit and reward at his coming, that we may make our appearance at his bar with joy and not with grief.

3. In order hereto, we should enquire who they are whom our Lord will condemn at his appearing, and whether we are found of their number, that if we are, we may hasten to escape from among them, and rank with those who shall stand approved before the Son of Man. For satisfaction on this head, we need only consider and compare ourselves with the character described in the words of our text, where we are, briefly indeed,

deed, but at the same time very clearly and fully informed respecting this matter. The Apostle tells us very expressly that Christ, when he is revealed, will take *vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Having then already considered the *certainly* and *manner* of our Lord's second coming, I proceed now as was proposed,

Secondly, To enquire into the *character* of those who shall be condemned at his coming to misery and perdition. The Apostle informs us,

1st. *They know not God.* And,
2dly. *They obey not the gospel.*

And, 1st. *They know not God.*

1. There is hardly any subject within the whole compass of religion, concerning which people in general are so grossly mistaken as the knowledge of God. All men profess to know God, tho' alas! the generality, by unholy tempers and wicked works, contradict that profession, and prove themselves to be entire strangers to him.—If a man have but heard or read a little about the Author of his being, if he believe his existence and perfections, he forthwith concludes that he knows God, and is very much offended if you presume to call it in question; tho', at the same time, this pretended knowledge has no happy influence upon him, but his spirit and behaviour are just the same, one might suppose they would be, if he were a mere atheist in the world.

2. Tho' he professes to be persuaded of the infinite glory and ineffable majesty of the eternal Jehovah, yet does he not inwardly reverence and humbly adore him; but is light and trifling, stupid and insensible, perhaps, even in his imme-

diate presence, and during the solemnity of his divine worship. Tho' he declares his assent to the immaculate holiness and inflexible justice of the Governor and final Judge of the world, yet is he not abased and confounded under a sense of his sinfulness and guilt, nor does he abhor himself as in dust and ashes; but he is proud and impenitent, presuming upon the goodness of his heart, if his life has not been altogether blameless, and laying his own righteousness as the foundation of his acceptance with God. Tho' (he thinks) he has no doubt at all of the boundless mercy and incomprehensible love of God in Christ; yet does he not cheerfully trust him with humble confidence, and joyfully praise him with grateful acknowledgments; the pure flame of divine love does not glow upon the altar of his heart, nor does he devote his body and soul as a living sacrifice to God by Jesus Christ. But, on the contrary, he desponds and repines under dark and afflictive dispensations of Providence, while he ungratefully admits the vain world, Jehovah's rival, to share, yea, *engross* his affections, and most treacherously harbours sin and satan, the Lord's enemies, in the inmost recesses of his soul.

3. So little is he benefited by the knowledge of God. But, in truth, what he has is not the knowledge of God, for if it were, it would infallibly produce the effects ascribed to this principle in the word of God. It would beget in him deep humility before God, entire confidence towards him, fervent love to him, and universal obedience; in short, holiness and happiness, a pledge and foretaste of eternal life. So we learn from the sacred scriptures. *I have heard of thee (says Job) by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. They that know thy name (says the*

the Psalmist) *will put their trust in thee. He that loveth not* (adds St. John) *knoweth not God, for God is love. And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, "I know him," and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* From hence it appears, where these effects are not, the true knowledge of God is not: An empty shadow, vain resemblance, or fleeting idea of it there may be, but that no more deserves to be called the knowledge of God, than the shadow, picture, or idea of a man, deserves to be called a man; and it can no more enliven, comfort, or purify our souls, than a painted fire can refine metals from their dross, or revive and warm our bodies; or than the notion of a candle can illuminate a dark room.

4. No: the knowledge of God is an endowment far superior to what the generality imagine; more noble in its origin, excellent in its nature, and happy in its consequences. It is born from above; it is the fruit of the Spirit of God, shining within us and enlightening our minds. For tho' all the divine perfections, especially his wisdom, power and love, beam forth with effulgent glory in all his works, particularly in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; yet the eyes of our understanding being blinded, we still remain destitute of the true and saving knowledge of God, *till he who commanded light to shine out of darkness shine into our hearts, (as the Apostle expresses it) to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face (or person) of Christ Jesus.* Then, and not before, can we testify with St. John, *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know the True One, and we are in the True One, by his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

5. And as the knowledge of God is descended from heaven, so is its *excellent nature* equal to its *divine original*. It is such an impression of God upon the soul, and such a clear, full and affecting discovery of him as transforms us, more or less, into his divine likeness. It is *the beholding*, (as St. Paul says) *with unveil'd face the glory of the Lord*, in such a manner that *we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord*: It is thro' the teaching of his word and spirit, such an acquaintance with God in his being and attributes, together with those relations in which he is pleased to stand towards us, as produces a correspondent temper of mind and conduct of life in us towards God.

6. To be a little more particular. 1st, The knowledge of God never fails to *humble us* before him. For it implies such a view of his nature and perfections, his self-existence, independence, sovereignty and eternity; his omniscience, omnipotence, justice and purity; his greatness and goodness, as manifests in the clearest light our own ignorance and weakness, guilt and misery, and lays us in the very dust in his presence. *Woe is me, for I am undone* (said Isaiah) *for I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Behold I am vile* (said Job on a like occasion) *what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*—We never see superior excellence but we are abased by the comparison: We never reflect on the perfection and happiness of an holy angel or glorified saint; nay, we never come into the company of an eminently holy man, tho' he is still encompassed with infirmity, but we are more or less humbled. How much more then, must we be humbled at the sight and in the presence of *that Being*, who is the one source of perfection and happiness to all

all his creatures, and in comparison of whom the whole circle of created excellence is no more than a drop to the immense ocean. And tho' we only see him thro' a glass darkly, while in this world, and therefore cannot feel such a depth of self-abasement, as they feel who *see him as he is*, and who, covering their faces with their wings, fall prostrate in his presence, and rest not day or night, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory." Yet in proportion to our acquaintance with him, we shall be ashamed and humbled before him, especially considering our sins against him, and the corruption and depravity of our whole nature, which renders us utterly unfit for converse with him, and deserving of his eternal displeasure: Surely a sense of *this*, at least, must lay us at his feet, and make us own with the Prophet, *It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

" I loath myself when him I see,
 " And into nothing fall :
 " Am lost and swallow'd up in thee,
 " My God, my all in all !
 " My humbled soul, when thou art near,
 " In dust and ashes lies :
 " How shall I in thy sight appear,
 " Or meet thy purer eyes ?"

7. Another never-failing fruit of the knowledge of God is *confidence in him*. *They that know thy name* (says the Psalmist) *will put their trust in thee*. Thereason of this is evident. They that know him, know him to be infinite in wisdom, and power, and goodness. They know him to be so wise as to be perfectly acquainted with all their wants, so powerful as to be well able to supply those wants, and so gracious, that he will withhold nothing good from those that walk uprightly. And tho' their

their sins against him might give them just cause to dread that wrath which they see they have merited; and beget in their minds many painful suspicions and distressing fears; yet when they know that he *bath so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life*: When being truly convinced of sin, they believe in Christ with a faith of the operation of God, and are justified by the faith of Christ: When they know *God in Christ reconciling them unto himself, and not imputing their trespasses to them*:—then does their dread of God's displeasure give place to a sense of his favour, and their doubts and fears respecting his goodness, yield to a confidence in his mercy, manifested in the pardon of all their sins thro' Jesus Christ. And then

“ All the clouds
 “ Which conscious guilt spread o'er their shudd'ring
 “ souls,
 “ Vanish before his reconciling eyes.”

Thus knowing God as a reconciled Father, who has accepted them thro' the Beloved, and made them his children by adoption and grace, they trust in him for direction in all difficulties, protection in all dangers, succour in all temptations, comfort in all troubles, and a supply of all their wants, and tho' they know they shall not be without chastisement (for what son is he whom his father chasteneth not?) yet do they know that their heavenly Father *chastiseth them, not willingly, but for their profit*, and are persuaded that *all things shall work together for their good*, as they are conscious that they *love God*.

8. This leads me to mention another particular, never to be separated from the knowledge of God, which is, *the love of God*. For so says St. John,

John, *love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God: He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.* When the Apostle says, *God is love*, he means both that God is lovely in himself, and also that he is loving to us. In his own nature he is amiable, excellent, yea, absolutely perfect, and to all the creatures he hath made, to mankind in particular, he is infinitely gracious and beneficent: Therefore it is in the nature of things impossible to be acquainted with so much beauty and goodness, and not to love it. Nor shall our love to this greatest and best of Beings be merely a love of *esteem* due to his infinite perfections, or even a love of *desire* arising from a sense of our want of his presence and blessing; but over and above this, we shall also love him with a love of *delight*. We shall take complacency in his divine attributes, and in those relations in which he is pleased to stand to us as our Father and our friend, and find our happiness in his favour and fellowship. We shall be able to adopt the words of Jeremiah, saying, *The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him*; or of the Psalmist, *The Lord is the lot of mine inheritance, and the portion of my cup: the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.*

9. One thing more I shall particularize here as a constant fruit of the knowledge of God, and that is *obedience*. For *he that saith he knoweth God, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* So testifies the beloved Disciple, and also adds, *that hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* And the same is the most sure and infallible proof of our love likewise, *for this is the love of God, says the same Apostle, that we keep his commandments; and he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them* (declares

(declares the faithful and true witness) *he it is that loveth me.* So that a conscientious care to keep all the commandments of God, even those which flesh and blood dislikes most, and to walk in all well-pleasing before him from day to day, is a never-failing consequence of our knowledge of God, and love to him; and *then, and only then, shall we not be ashamed of professing these endowments when we have respect to all his commandments, and keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.*

10. And here I cannot but observe, upon the whole, how well the scriptures guard the knowledge of God (which is only another word for true religion) on all sides, against the false claims which deluded men put in for it from opposite quarters. The self-righteous Pharisee, who lays his own works, of which he has a mistaken opinion, as the foundation of his acceptance with God, is cut off by the two first of the particulars I have mentioned, for he is neither abased before God for his sins, nor has he an humble confidence in the divine mercy. The third of these marks, shews the emptiness of the *Formalist's* boast, whose lukewarm heart and trifling spirit testify against him, that he has not the love of God in him. And as for the *Antinomian*, who *makes void the law thro' faith, and continues in sin because grace abounds,* he finds his reproof and condemnation in the last particular. For tho' *he says he knows God* (and indeed he has need to say it, for no one would have inferred it from his life,) yet *because he keepeth not his commandments,* we are sure *he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

11. From this account of the knowledge of God, and its inseparable effects, it is easy to see who they are that *know him not,* and of consequence who they are upon whom Christ, at his second

second coming, will take vengeance. They are those who have no higher and better acquaintance with God, than that which they have attained by the exercise of their natural faculties and rational powers, in the consideration of his word and works, having never received the *spirit of wisdom and revelation* (as the Apostle speaks, Eph. i. 17.) *in the knowledge of him.* They are those who have indeed *heard of God by the hearing of the ear*, but have never (as it were) *seen him* by faith, or been inwardly enlightened with a discovery of his glorious perfections, and therefore do not *abhor themselves, and repent as in dust and ashes*: They are those who do not know God in Christ reconciling them unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and therefore not being persuaded that he is *pacified towards them after all they have done*, they do not trust in him as a tender Father and a faithful Friend, in covenant with them through Jesus Christ. They are those who do not *behold* with open face (the veil of unbelief being removed) *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon them*, and therefore do not consciously *love him, who hath first loved them.* They are those, lastly, who perhaps *profess to know God*, but by *works deny him*, not keeping his commandments, or keeping them merely in external things, and that with reluctance, from a principal of slavish fear, as tho' God were an hard master, and obedience to him a task enjoined, which it would be our interest and happiness to be excused from performing.—Upon all such will Christ, when he is reveal'd, take vengeance.

I now proceed to the other particular mentioned in our text, concerning the character of those whom our Lord will condemn.

2dly. *They obey not the Gospel of Christ.*

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A few observations on this, will greatly illustrate what has already been advanced, and enable us still better to judge concerning our true state and condition. I mean to pursue the same method I did under the former head, shewing positively what is implied in *obeying the gospel*, that we may infer from thence who they are that *disobey it*.

1. It will be easily understood what is meant by *obeying the gospel*, if we consider what the gospel is. And this may be learnt, in some measure, even from the original word (translated *gospel* in the New Testament) which, it is well known, signifies *good news* or *glad tidings*. Accordingly, what is termed *gospel* in the 4th of St. Luke, is translated *good tidings* in the 51st of Isaiah; and the preachers of the gospel are represented in the same chapter (ver. 7th) as bringing *good tidings*, as *publishing peace*, as *bringing good tidings of good*, as *publishing salvation*. This then is the very essence of the gospel, *good tidings* or *tidings of good*, even of peace and salvation, of peace with God, and salvation from sin and misery. To explain this a little,

2. The gospel brings us tidings of forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, of free and full justification, thro' faith in the Lord Jesus. It allows indeed, nay testifies, that *there is none righteous* (by nature) *no not one, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that the whole world is guilty before God, and that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. And in consequence of this, it declares, *that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight*. But then at the same time it assures us, that *God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation thro' faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness* (both his justice and

and mercy) *for the remission of sins that are past, thro' the forbearance of God.* It affirms, that *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and that he hath committed to his servants the word of reconciliation.* And hence they agree to offer pardoning mercy to all penitent sinners, and to bear witness, that *whosoever believeth on Christ doth receive forgiveness of sins; yea, that by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by their own obedience.*

3. Hence it appears what it is to obey the gospel in this view of it, as it is a manifestation of pardoning mercy thro' a Mediator. It is, 1st, to see and feel ourselves guilty before God, and therefore to renounce all confidence in our own righteousness, from a conviction of its insufficiency for our justification. It is, 2dly, to apply to the all-sufficient merits of our Redeemer, with penitent hearts, forsaking our sins, and putting our whole trust in him for salvation present and eternal. It is, 3dly, firmly to believe and appropriate to ourselves God's gracious promises of pardon and everlasting life made to us for his sake. This is implied in believing in Christ, and all who thus believe, are *justified by the faith of Christ*, and, in this respect, *obey the gospel.*

4. Indeed we cannot thus believe of ourselves; but then for our comfort the gospel is further a dispensation of the Spirit of God given to work this faith in us, witness this justification to our souls, and sanctifying our nature, to restore us to that image of God in which we were originally created. It supposes that our *sins have separated between us and God*, and caused him to hide his face from us, whence *we are alienated from the life of God, and even dead in trespasses and sins.* It takes for granted (and well it may, for it is matter of

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daily and universal observation, confirmed by experience,) that we are altogether depraved and polluted thro' sin, insomuch that *every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil, and that continually*: from which corrupt fountain the most pernicious streams are perpetually flowing; so that we are earthly, sensual, and devilish, all our tempers, words, and works being in direct opposition to the law of God.—But then, notwithstanding, yea *because* of this depravity and ruin of our once pure and perfect nature; and, with a view to its removal, it informs us that as *Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, so being exalted to the Father's right hand, he hath received the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds forth abundantly on the children of men, inviting all that thirst, yea, and whosoever will, to come and partake of it.*

5. Now this spirit is an universal remedy for all the disorders of our fallen nature.—Hereby the darkness is removed from our minds, and the hardness from our hearts; our understanding is enlightened, our will subdued, our affections set upon things above, and all our unholy tempers and corrupt inclinations purged away. Hereby we *die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; put off the old man, and put on the new.* By this, the divine nature is communicated to us, and the divine image stamp'd upon us; we are transformed into the likeness, and conformed to the will of God. Here wisdom lights her lamp, and from hence love kindles her fire: This feeds the flames of devotion, and without this, prayer and praise are cold and languid. By this, the life of God is opened in the soul, and the kingdom of God set up in the heart. Being joined to the Lord, we become one spirit with him, and we dwell in him and he in us. In a word, heaven

is brought down upon earth, and an earnest of our future inheritance is given us, until the full redemption of the purchased possession.

6. But be it observed, tho' this spirit more or less enlightens and strives with all, (as appears not only from scripture, but also from experience, all men, the most abandoned not excepted, having, at one time or an other, felt some remorse on account of sin, and some desire after holiness,) yet in these his saving influences, he is only imparted to those who follow his drawings, and comply with his design. For this spirit of light and love does not operate upon us as if we were inanimate matter, lifeless and inactive, but as rational creatures, endowed with a power to *yield to*, or *resist* his sacred operations. Accordingly, we are exhorted not to *grieve* or *quench* the holy spirit of God, by opposing his work; but, on the contrary, working with him *to mortify the deeds of the body; that we may live*. And *living in the spirit*, we are further directed to *walk in the spirit*, that is, to suffer ourselves to be led by him into all truth, holiness, and happiness, that we may bring forth all his blessed fruits, and abound in every holy temper, word, and work.—And this is the very thing implied in *obeying the gospel* in this second view of it, as it is a *dispensation of the Spirit*.

7. Thus shall we be obedient to the gospel in every other respect. We shall be delivered (as it were) into the mould of its *doctrines*, every feature and lineament of it being inscribed upon us. We shall revere its *threatenings*, and steadily guard against that temper and conduct which would expose us to them. We shall obey all its *commands* with fidelity and chearfulness, rejoicing hereby to shew our love to our glorious Redeemer. We shall cordially embrace its *exceeding great and precious*.

precious promises, earnestly desiring and expecting their full accomplishment. And, in the mean time, we shall calmly, yea and joyfully, suffer all the obloquy, reproach, and persecution to which our profession may lay us open, *knowing that our reward is great in heaven*. Lastly, for this reward, with all the bliss and glory prepared for the children of God, we shall patiently wait, longing and looking for the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, to put a final period to our time of trial and suffering, and *receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also*.

These particulars might have been enlarged upon for the further illustration of this head; but as this would open up too much matter to be comprized in one sermon; I beg leave to sum up what has already been advanced by way of enquiry, and so conclude this plain but interesting Discourse.

I. And I ask thee, then, whosoever thou art that readest these lines, Hast thou the foundation of all true religion; dost thou know the *only true God*? Has he been revealed to thy inmost soul by his holy Spirit in all his divine perfections? And has this manifestation of him been effectual to transform thee (in some measure at least) into his image, and render thee a true follower of God? Has it humbled thy pride and covered thee with shame, scattered thy fears and inspired thee with confidence, destroyed thy idols and united thy heart to the source of all beauty and goodness? Dost thou know him in his *holiness* and *justice*, and art thou convinced of sin?—In his *mercy* and *love*, and art thou reconciled to him? Has he discovered himself to thee as thy *friend*, who is pacified towards thee after all thou hast done? As thy *Father*, who has made thee
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his child, and given thee the spirit of adoption in thy heart? And as thy God, who has taken thee into covenant with himself, thro' Christ, and is become thy portion and treasure in time and in eternity?

2. I ask further, Dost thou not only *know the only true God*, but *Jesus Christ* also whom he hath sent, the only mediator between God and man, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the godhead, and in whom alone there is salvation for a lost world? In other words, Dost thou *obey the gospel*, and is it become the *power of God to thy salvation*? Hast thou seen and felt thy absolute need of the incomparable blessings it offers, free justification through the blood of Christ, and entire sanctification by the Spirit of God? And hast thou accounted tidings of these unsearchable riches of Christ, *glad tidings of great joy*? Hast thou beheld thyself to be a guilty, helpless, perishing sinner, condemned by thy own conscience, accursed by God's holy law, exposed to his fierce wrath, and obnoxious to eternal misery?—In this wretched situation, hast thou eagerly heard, and joyfully believed, the most gracious proclamation of pardon, made by the Ambassadors of the King of Heaven? Hast thou believed in Christ, that thou mightest be justified by the faith of Christ? And dost thou daily evidence the truth of thy faith by thy works? Professing to be justified by Christ, art thou not found a sinner continuing in sin, but being made free from sin, art thou become a servant to righteousness? Hast thou received the Holy Ghost since thou believedst, and has that spirit of grace enlightened, quickened, and purified thy soul? Dost thou live and walk in the Spirit, and is thy conversation such as becometh the gospel? Dost thou walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful?

fruitful in every good work, and encreasing in the knowledge of God?

3. Be it known unto thee, whosoever thou art, of whatever sentiment, of whatever denomination, of whatever party, if thou canst not answer these questions in the affirmative, if thou dost not know God and obey the gospel, as has been described, thou art at present most certainly one of those upon whom Christ, when he cometh, will take vengeance. But, blessed be God, thou dost not need to remain such. Thou hast it in thy power, thro' the tender mercy of our God, to *acquaint thyself with him and be at peace*, that after all, *good may come unto thee*. Only let there be no delay: forthwith *come out from among the wicked, be separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and he will receive thee, and will be a Father unto thee*. Draw nigh to God, thro' Christ, in that new and living way of faith, which he hath consecrated for thee, and he will draw nigh to thee: he will shew thee his glory: will manifest himself to thee as he does not unto the world; and thou shalt know him, whom to know is life eternal, while the gospel of Christ is the very gate of heaven to thy believing soul.

S E R M O N

SERMON III.

2 THESS. i. 7, 8, 9.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

1. **I**T is remarkable, that in the account here given us, by the Apostle, of the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the eternally awful consequences of it, he represents our Lord's second coming to be rather in order to the salvation of his own people, than the punishment of the wicked. For tho' he mentions his taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel, yet it seems this shall be done, as it were, by the by, since (as he declares in the 10th verse) the end, the *principal end* of his coming is, that he *may be glorified in his saints, and admired of all that believe.*

2. How plain is it from hence, as well as from a thousand other considerations, that mercy is our Lord's darling attribute, and that judgment is his strange work. He delights to dispense pardons and confer rewards; but it is with reluctance

ance that he passeth sentence of condemnation, or inflicts punishment on any. From the Apostle's manner of representing the matter, one would conclude that he would much rather pass the poor wretches by, did not the unchangeable perfections of his nature, the divine authority of his laws, and the unalterable rights of his government, oblige him to take notice of them. But inasmuch as all his other attributes must be manifested and honoured, as well as his love, his law magnified, and the equity of his government maintained; therefore he must and will render to every man according to his works: to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man who worketh evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. As certainly as he will account his saints worthy through the worthiness of Christ, of the kingdom for which they suffer, so certainly, when he is revealed, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, will he take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.

In two former discourses on these words, the certainty and manner of our Lord's second coming, as also the character of those he will then condemn, have been particularly considered. I now proceed, as was proposed, to shew

III. The nature and duration of their misery. But that we may justify the ways of God to man, and prevent any abuse which might be made of this doctrine to the disparagement of the divine goodness, I think it proper to premise a few words concerning the reason of their condemnation and punishment.

I. This

1. This is signified in the words of our text which speak of Christ's "taking vengeance on them," and "punishing them." The expressions (especially in the Greek, "*διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν*," "*δικὴν τιθεῖν*,") intimate an unbecoming and injurious conduct in them towards God, which being examined into, they now receive the due reward of their deeds. Enquire we then what their conduct has been, and we shall easily see the reason of their misery. And here I do not mention their violation of the law of innocence or covenant of works, made with our first parents before their fall, because the scripture no where (that I remember) represents this as the cause of the condemnation of any at the day of judgement. But with our Lord, I observe, *This is the condemnation* (the reason of the condemnation of those who perish) *that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil. They rejected the council of God against themselves; they neglected the gospel salvation; they would not come unto Christ that they might have life; they refused him to reign over them; they buried (instead of improving) their talent of light and power, slighted the divine mercy, counted the blood of the covenant a common thing* (i. e. they trifled with and abused it,) and *did final despite to the Spirit of Grace*, and, therefore, they are condemned; or, in the language of our text, Christ takes vengeance on them because they *knew not God*, when they might have known him, and *obeyed not the gospel*, whereas they might have been obedient unto it. Or, in plainer words still, he dooms them to everlasting fire; not because he appointed them to wrath, and decreed their damnation before they were born, but because he *would have saved them, and they would not*, chusing death rather than life, and cursing rather than blessing!

2. It

2. And that you may be able to form some idea (tho' after all it will be faint and inadequate) of the divine justice manifested in their punishment, consider both the conduct of God towards them, and theirs in return towards him : Consider the love of the Father in giving his only begotten Son, and exposing him to the most dreadful sufferings and ignominious death for those wretched sinners, who had abused his mercies, broken his laws, trampled under foot his authority, and rebelled against his government : Consider the Son of God emptying himself of his glory and happiness, assuming our frail nature in its meanest form, and at last submitting to pain and shame in their greatest extremities ; and all this for his bitterest enemies, who slighted his dying love, refused his mild government, and even embued their hands in his most precious blood, or daily crucified him afresh : Consider the holy Spirit of grace operating in various ways, and at different times ; enlightening, awakening, convincing ; alarming with fear, alluring with hope, drawing with love ; comforting in trouble, strengthening in weakness, succouring in temptation ; and this with a view to beget repentance, faith, and holiness in the soul, as a spirit of adoption to cry in us " Abba, Father," to seal us to the day of redemption, and give us an earnest of our future inheritance in our hearts : Consider him as persisting in these kind offices, notwithstanding all the neglect, contempt, and contumely wherewith we treat him ; notwithstanding we shut our eyes against his light, stop our ears to his calls, slight his love, reject his favours, and quench his motions ; inviting the most impure lusts and diabolical tempers, to supply the place of his spiritual graces, and entertaining the foul fiend of hell in the inmost recesses of our souls, which

which should be kept sacred to this heavenly inhabitant. In short, consider the amazing plan of our redemption from first to last, in all its wonderful variety, in all its mysterious grace : Consider the abyss of guilt and misery where it finds us, and from whence it delivers us ; the height of bliss and glory to which it advances us, and in which it establishes us ; together with the astonishing process of divine love in the accomplishment of this great and good work. In a word, consider the greatness of this salvation provided for us, and offered to us in the gospel ; and then say what punishment, what torment do they deserve, and from an holy and just God must they meet with, who neglect and reject it !

3. From a *just* God I say, for they have doubtless nothing further to expect from his mercy and goodness. The sun of divine love is now for ever set upon them. It shone indeed with effulgent brightness during the whole day of life, tho' it was never suffered to enlighten their minds or warm their hearts, clouds of prejudice, exhaled from their sensual souls, obscuring its beams, and the thick vail of unbelief excluding its light ; but it will now shine no more ! It has now resigned them to the scorching fire of divine wrath, which (however reluctant they may be) will effectually enlighten and warm them ; but, ah ! with how different a flame ! with how dismal a light ! The streams of divine grace, which long watered their still-barren souls in vain, are now run out, or rather diverted into a more fruitful soil, and streams of indignation are directed, by infinite justice, to flow in upon and eternally overwhelm them.

4. Being awakened out of the long sleep of death by the tremendous sound of the trump of God, they are summoned to appear before the
awful

awful tribunal of the Universal Judge. A great white throne is erected, and he who is the desire of nations and the joy of angels, sits upon it. *His head and his hair are white as snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire; his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. In his right-hand he carries seven stars, out of his mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance is as the sun shining in his strength.*

- “ Where’er serene, he turns propitious eyes,
 “ We find a newly open’d paradise:
 “ But if resentment reddens their mild beams,
 “ The Eden kindles, and the world’s in flames:
 “ On one hand knowledge shines with purest light;
 “ On one the sword of justice fiercely bright.”

Before this glorious person, to whom the Father hath committed all judgment, and who hath all power in heaven and on earth, trembling and reluctant they make their appearance, and receive their final sentence at his bar.

5. The books being opened, and every secret thing brought to light, all their thoughts, words, and works pass in review before him, and undergo a severe scrutiny.—And thus all their transgressions and defects being discovered in all their aggravations, they are recompensed in exact proportion to their demerits. For since they rejected the satisfaction made by Christ, and there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, divine and infinite justice arrests their guilty souls, and confines them in the dark prison of hell, till they have satisfied all its demands by their personal sufferings, which, alas! they can never do. They must therefore sink for ever under the enormous weight of that dreadful curse; which, with respect to them, Christ bore in vain, and must reim-

burse

burse (if I may so speak) by an increased misery, all the expense which divine goodness has been at with them. The love and mercy which was shewn these wicked wretches, the blood which was shed for them, the grace which was conferred upon them, shall all be considered, and as they will demonstrate in the blackest light, their ingratitude and obstinacy, so will they greatly enhance their condemnation, and aggravate their torment! Having thus manifested their desert of the punishment provided for them, that it is a debt owed them by impartial justice and despised mercy, I proceed, as was proposed, to shew,

Secondly, The nature and duration of their misery. On this I shall 1st, make some general observations, by way of explaining the text and establishing the doctrine.

2dly, I shall take a more particular view of this misery.

3dly, Shall conclude with an earnest address to saints and sinners.

And 1st, I am to make some general observations, by way of explaining the text and establishing the doctrine.

1. The Apostle calls their misery *destruction*, by which 'tis plain he does not mean "the extinction of their being," or "the annihilation of their nature," because this sense of the word is contrary to the general tenor of the scriptures, which represent the wicked as not only existing after the day of judgement, but as suffering the most exquisite torture. But by this expression we are plainly to understand what is infinitely worse than annihilation, viz. 1st, The utter ruin of their once holy and happy nature, with the final death of all their comforts and their hopes; and 2dly,

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The entire perversion of all their powers and faculties, which are now only employed in rendering themselves most compleatly wretched. Meaning to enlarge on these two particulars, when I come to take a nearer view of this misery, I say no more of them at present, but observe,

2. Their destruction is said to be *from the presence of the Lord*. This intimates to us what is the chief source of their ruin and misery, viz. their banishment from the gracious presence of God, their exclusion from his favour and fellowship.—In consequence of original sin, and because they rejected the garments of salvation, provided by Christ, and offered in the Gospel, therefore they are found, at the day of judgment, destitute of the divine image, that splendid and comely apparel which is the glory of the holy angels, and which was once the chief ornament and happiness of man in his primeval state. The rotten and filthy rags of their own righteousness, which they had taken pains to patch together and throw over their sinful souls, only serve to increase their deformity, and manifest still more their sin and shame. They cannot hide their pollution and defilement. In spite of all their endeavours, they appear polluted with the guilt of innumerable transgressions, and all over defiled with iniquity, whose fatal leprosy hath spread its loathsome influence throughout their whole souls, and woe-fully enfeebled all their powers.

3. They are, therefore, objects of divine disapprobation and abhorrence. *The God who made them will not have mercy on them, and he who formed them will shew them no favour*. They are excluded the favour of Jehovah, which is better than life, which diffuses light and joy thro' the happy regions of immortality, and banishes every shadow of evil far from their peaceful dwellings. They are debarred all communion with, and access to,

the Father of their spirits, and the God of all consolation and good hope, who is the only true and lasting source of felicity to his intelligent offspring. They are even shut out of the blissful city, denied all fellowship with saints and angels, and banished far from the dwellings of liberty and joy, into the dreary territories of misery and anguish.

4. Thus being immensely removed from all that is holy and happy, and deserted of the Sun of Righteousness, the light and life of the spiritual world; midnight-darkness overwhelms their minds, a furious storm is raised in their passions, and wandering about in endless perplexity, and abandoned to everlasting despair, they are tossed to and fro by the tempestuous hurricanes, and raging flames of those sulphureous regions; and to compleat the ruin of their once holy and happy nature, the hedge of their souls being broken down (I mean, the divine protection being withdrawn) they are exposed to the desolating ravages of the devil and his angels, those wild beasts of the infernal forest, who ranging forth in these inhospitable realms, overspread with a gloomy and perpetual night, lay the garden of the Lord utterly waste, and root up and destroy whatever of excellence may remain.

5. But this phrase—*destruction from the presence of the Lord*, may be also understood in another sense. It seems not only to signify the misery consequent, in the nature of things, upon their banishment from God's *gracious* presence, their separation from saints and angels, and their exclusion out of the heavenly city (generally termed their punishment, of loss concerning which I cannot now speak particularly :) It likewise may be considered as intimating, if it does not chiefly intend, that God himself, as he is present in heaven in all his love and goodness, as an in-

exhaustible source of felicity to his people, as a never-failing river of pleasure, where they may take large and repeated draughts of bliss ;—so is he present in hell, in his infinite justice and almighty wrath, as an unfathomable sea of liquid fire, where the wicked must drink in everlasting torture. For as it is the presence of God in his *goodness*, which diffuses light and joy through the happy regions of immortality, so it is the presence of God in his *vengeance*, which scatters darkness and woe thro' the dreary realms of misery. As heaven would be no heaven if God did not there manifest his *love* ; so hell would be no hell, if God did not there display his wrath. It is the presence and agency of God, which gives every thing virtue and efficacy, without which there can be no life, no sensibility, no power.—God is, therefore, himself present in hell, to see to the punishment of these rebels against his government, that it may be adequate to the infinity of their guilt. His fiery indignation *kindles*, and his incensed fury *blows* the flames of their torment, while his powerful presence and operation maintains their *being*, and renders all their powers most acutely sensible ; thus setting the keenest edge upon their pain, and making it cut most intolerably deep !

6. Nay further : it seems implied in the next expression in our text, *from the glory of his power*, that he will exert all his divine attributes to the utmost, to make them as wretched as the capacity of their nature will admit. He will especially glorify his *power*, and render it illustrious in their damnation.—Gladly would he have glorified his rich grace in pardoning their complicated guilt, and his almighty power in restoring them to his image, that they might have been raised to a share in his throne : But despising his great salvation, they would not come unto Christ that they might

might have life. And now, nothing remains but that he glorify himself in their misery, since they refused that happiness which he would have conferr'd upon them, to the manifestation of his own glory. For he must and will be glorified one way or another in all his creatures; and with respect to these ungrateful and disobedient wretches, he has but one way left in which he can be glorified, and that is, to reward them according to their works, by recompensing their ingratitude and disobedience upon their own guilty heads.

7. Thus (as the Apostle testifies) Rom. 9, while he *makes known the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy*, which he hath afore prepared unto glory, he will also *shew his wrath, and make his power known, in the vessels of wrath, fitted* (by their own wilful and unnecessitated impenitence) *for destruction*, after he has *first endured them with much long suffering*. *Shew his wrath and make his power known!* dreadful expressions! what an unfathomable depth of woe do they imply! Ah! miserable creatures, in whom God will shew how severely he can punish, and what a fierce fire of wrath his almighty power can kindle! Surely as the condition of the saints must be inconceivably joyful, in whom God will *make known* (as the Apostle has it) *the riches of his glory*, i. e. display how gloriously rich he is in goodness, and to what a pitch of honour and happiness his omnipotence can raise the objects of his love! so, on the other hand, the state of these wretches must be equally lamentable! Unhappy creatures! from what an height of glory and felicity, into what a depth of infamy and misery have they knowingly and willfully plunged themselves! And now.

“ Their dire punishment is ever strong,

“ Their constitution too, for ever young;

“ Curs'd with returns of vigour still the same,

“ At once to bear and satisfy the flame :

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“ Still

“ Still they are caught, and still they are pursued ;
 “ They suffer still, and still they are renewed.”

8. For the Apostle tells us, their destruction will be *eternal*; a declaration which is confirm'd by many other passages of Scripture. One or two I shall now produce as a specimen of the rest. Thus Daniel assures us: *They shall* (viz. at the general resurrection) *awake to everlasting shame and contempt*, even as the saints shall arise *to everlasting life: they shall go away into everlasting punishment*, says the faithful and true witness, even as *the righteous shall go into life eternal*. And indeed the eternity of their misery seems a natural consequence of what has been advanced in the two last paragraphs. For if God will display in them (as has been observed) the *infinity* of his justice, the *severity* of his wrath, and the *omnipotence* of his power, then must their punishment be everlasting, because their nature being finite, it does not appear how he can do this in any limited duration of time, however long. And thus what is wanting in the *degree* of their misery, is made up by its *continuance*. And for the same reason, among others, we conclude, the happiness of the righteous shall be *eternal*, because in them God will manifest the infinite riches of his love and goodness, which considering the finite capacity of their nature, he cannot do in less than a boundless eternity.

9. If need were, I might add in confirmation of this doctrine, disputed by few, that as the holiness and obedience of the saints, still continue and encrease in heaven, and therefore there must be the same and greater reason for their being rewarded with bliss and glory, when they have been millions of ages in happiness, than when they first entered the gates of Paradise; so, the depravity and disobedience of the wicked still continuing and encreasing, there must be the very same, yea, and greater reason for their punishment,

ment, when they have been millions of ages in torment, than when they first departed accursed into *everlasting fire*! They must be perpetually swelling their enormous sum of guilt, and still running deeper, immensely deeper in debt to divine and infinite justice; God having as much right to, and as certainly claiming their obedience in hell, as the obedience of his saints in heaven. For it is, in the nature of things, impossible he should dispense with the allegiance of any of his creatures.—Hence, after the longest imaginable period, they will be so far from having discharged their debt of punishment, that they will find more, infinitely *more* due than when they first began to suffer! Dreadful this indeed! but too true!

10. Indeed, the comparison drawn from the happiness of the saints, is not altogether suitable; but alas! the impropriety of it falls on the unfavourable side, and only strengthens my argument the more. For whatever proofs may be brought from other quarters in favour of the eternity of their bliss, which do not equally evince the eternal misery of the wicked; yet, in this point of view (sure I am) more may be said for the latter than the former. For the righteous, however obedient, do no more than is their duty to do, and therefore (strictly speaking) *merit* nothing at the hand of God. They can make no claim upon his *justice*, but all their hopes of happiness and a continuance therein, are founded upon his gracious promises, which he was free to make or not to make, as he thought good.—But the case is different with the wicked; they have *strictly* and *properly merited* or *deserved* eternal punishment, and are, in fact, obnoxious to it. And hence their apprehensions of it are founded, not barely on his threatenings, but also and chiefly on the unchangeable perfections of his nature.—So that it appears, if this reasoning is just, they have

have more than double that cause for fearing an *eternal* hell, which the saints have for expecting an *everlasting* heaven!

II. The reason of the divine conduct in giving them this two-fold proof (arising from his threatenings and the perfections of his nature) of a doctrine which, above all others, they hate and wish to disprove, seems to be his compassion for these infatuated creatures. He means, by this double battery, to silence their evil reasoning unbelief, which, as an impregnable fort, defies the whole force of divine truth, and too often detains the poor soul a captive of sin and satan, till the judgment of the great day! May his blessed spirit give the desired efficacy to these engines, which infinite wisdom hath planted against the perverseness of unthinking men! May they level all the strong holds of Satan, and bring into captivity every unbelieving sinner to the obedience of Christ, before sad experience convince them, that in hell *the worm* of their anguish *dieth not*, and *the fire* of their misery is *not quenched*, but its flame *ascendeth up for ever and ever!*

But it would be needless, had I both time and inclination for it, to enter upon the formal and particular proof of a doctrine which you do not disbelieve, and therefore I forbear to enlarge on this head. You are (I have reason to think) fully persuaded, that the torments of hell are eternal, according to the testimony of Scripture, and of consequence by the destruction mentioned in our text, we are not to understand the extinction of the being of the wicked; but (as I said) “the utter ruin of their once holy and happy nature, with the final death of all their comforts and their hopes, and also the entire perversion of all their faculties, which are now only employed in adding to their misery, and rendering them most compleatly wretched.” This would lead me, as was proposed,

2dly,

2dly, To take a more particular view of their misery in these respects, but as this is too extensive a subject to be discussed at present, your time being gone, I shall defer it to another opportunity, and now conclude with a short improvement of what has been said, by way of inference and application.

And, 1st, We may infer from what has been said, the infatuation and misery of those *who know not God, and obey not the gospel*. Whether they promise themselves an exemption from this eternal destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power; or whether they flatter themselves it will not be so dreadful and intolerable as it is represented to be; or whether they indulge a vain hope of being some time or other released from this infernal prison, it is evident, if what has been advanced be true, that they are most miserably blinded by the God of this world, and deceived by the deceitfulness of sin.—Oh ye that *know not God, and obey not the gospel*, we testify to you, upon the authority of the lively oracles of eternal truth, that you are the very persons who are now exposed to this dreadful storm of divine indignation, which already gathers black over your guilty heads, and threatens a desolating downfall of misery and woe! The lowering clouds, surcharged with fiery vapours of wrath, at the command of incensed justice will, ere long, pour a whole deluge of ruin upon your perverse and ungrateful souls. Yes, if your speedy repentance prevent not, upon you, even you, an offended and inexorable God will *rain fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, and this shall be your portion to drink*. Let not then that subtle serpent, in whom you trust, beguile you, saying, “You shall not surely die;” for as the Lord liveth, if you persist to know not God, and obey not the gospel, you shall surely and eternally die.

die. *You shall drink the very dregs of this cup of trembling and wring them out. God is not a man that he should lye, or the son of man that he should repent. Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? Hath he threatened, and shall he not make it good?* As sure as he is a being of immutable truth and inflexible justice, and as sure as you have broken his law and rejected his gospel, so sure must you at the morning of the resurrection *awake to everlasting shame and contempt*, and at the day of judgment *depart accursed into everlasting fire*.

2. And suppose you that the empty and uncertain applause of worms of the earth, or the vain and momentary pleasures of sin, or the unsatisfactory and fleeting glitter of golden ore, can recompense you for the shame and contempt which will then overwhelm you with eternal confusion, and that pain and anguish which the scorching and fiery lake will pour like water into your bowels, and like oil into your bones? Unthinking and deluded mortal! The praises of thy fellow-sinners will then be turned into insults and hisses, thy cup of pleasure into a draught of wrath, and thy glittering treasures into fiery streams of brimstone and torture: Streams these, which will for ever deluge thy desolated nature; a draught this, which will intoxicate thy soul with eternal horror; and hisses and insults those, with which, as with whips and scorpions, the fiends of hell will perpetually lash thy guilty and self-accusing conscience! Believe me, my poor fellow-mortal, thou canst not, indeed thou canst not bear this devouring fire! Thou canst not dwell with these everlasting burnings! If thou thinkest otherwise, it is because thou hast not counted the cost, but hast rashly credited the devil and thy own deceitful heart, which were both liars from the beginning, and have not abode in the truth. They have agreed to make thee

thee drunk with sensuality and sin, to put out thy eyes, and then to lead thee blindfold into endless ruin, a ruin from whence thou shalt never escape.

3. Oh! think, man, before the intoxicating cup of sin renders thee incapable of thinking, in what a wretched condition thou art soon likely to be, if divine grace prevents not! Oh! look, before the God of this world hath closed thy eyes in eternal darkness, into that tremendous ocean, of fiery and unfathomable wrath, into which the stream of time will soon hurry thy frail and leaky vessel! How intolerable and lasting thy misery! Oh! think of eternity; canst thou number the stars in the firmament, the drops of rain or the sand on the sea-shore? Make the experiment; and when thou hast finish'd the calculation, sit down and reckon up the ages of thy woe! And see that thy account be just. Let every star, every drop, every grain of sand represent one million of tormenting ages. And when thou hast ascertain'd the sum, know that as many more millions still remain behind, and yet as many more behind these, and so on without end! Poor infatuated wretch! My heart bleeds for thee!—Gladly would I warn thee that thou come not into this place of torment. Oh! that at length thou would'st take warning! Oh! that thou would'st imitate the example of *Noah, who being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, was moved with fear, and prepared an ark for the saving of his house.*

4. I warn thee, thou unholy and ungodly soul, who dost not know God, nor obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, of things not seen as yet: of the glorious coming of that adorable Saviour, whose salvation thou hast rejected, whom thou hast refused to reign over thee, and whom, by sin, thou hast crucified afresh: I warn thee of an approaching and inexorable Judge, who (if thou repent not) will summon thee, with all thy sins
about

about thee, to his bar, and pass an irreversibile sentence upon thee. I warn thee of a descending deluge of divine and infinite wrath, which will speedily drown an impenitent and unbelieving world with a fiery and unfathomable sea of misery ! I call upon thee without delay to prepare an ark for the saving of thy soul. Nay, for thy encouragement I tell thee, the ark is already prepared. The almighty love of God, directed by infinite wisdom, hath prepared it : An ark this, which will defend thee against all the storms of wrath, and which will bear thee up above all the waves of misery. Yes, we point thee to that man *who is as an hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* We bid thee *look to Jesus and be saved!*

5. Oh ! hide thee, by faith in him, from the wind of temptation and sin ; let his blood sprinkled upon thy guilty conscience, and his righteousness put upon thy naked soul, cover thee from the tempest of divine indignation : Let his spirit flowing into thy heart as a river, refresh and water thy scorched and barren soul, and rest thee under his cooling shade, till the burning sun of persecution shall go down, and the fiery heat of pain and affliction shall finally cease ! Flee for refuge to this hope set before thee, and all shall be well.—For sake all known sin, use every appointed means of grace, and be also careful to maintain and excel in good works, but yet rest not there. Oh ! *tarry not in all the plain of duty, but escape to this mountain lest thou be consumed.* And thus like just Lot, thou shalt be delivered from the common overthrow of the impenitent and unbelieving, and shall sing the praises of thy Deliverer and Saviour world without end.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

2 T H E S S. i. 9.

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

1. **H**OW infallibly certain, and how astonishingly grand and striking, are the events presented to our view by the Apostle in this alarming passage of holy writ! How well worthy the serious attention and devout contemplation of all who love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, yea, and of all mankind! And yet (amazing it is!) they are in general overlooked and disregarded, even by those who profess to be assured of them!

2. The revolutions which are continually happening in the petty states and fluctuating affairs of this world; the accession of temporal princes to their transitory dignities and corruptible crowns; the poor and insignificant conquests obtained by worms of the earth over their fellow-reptiles; the approach of earthly judges, and the trial, condemnation, and punishment of the violators of human laws, *these* are events which short-sighted mortals deem of consequence enough to occupy their thoughts in private, to employ their tongues in conversation, and to dignify the annals of history. They *think*, they *talk*, they *write* of these.

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3. In

3. In the mean time, the grand revolution of universal nature; the glorious exaltation of the Prince of the kings of the earth; his compleat and everlasting triumph over principalities and powers, and all the potent enemies of his government; the coming of the final Judge of angels and of men; the decisive trial of the whole world at his bar; and the infinite and eternal rewards and punishments then to be dispensed to immortal souls, united to incorruptible bodies;—these subjects, though interesting beyond thought, and grand beyond comparison, are, alas! too generally treated with indifference and neglect! These are judged unfit for meditation in secret, lest they should make us melancholy; unworthy of a place in polite and genteel company, for fear they should damp their mirth and spoil their pleasure; and sure it is, he who means to gain either honour or profit by his pen, must take care not to employ it on these dreary and *puritanical* (not to say *methodistical*) subjects, for which this light and airy age has no relish.

4. Blessed be God, that these soul-exalting and heart-improving subjects have any place left whither to retire! Blessed be God, that they are not yet quite banished out of the world! They are still (thanks to Divine Providence!) allowed to remain in our Bibles, and now and then (though not often) to ascend the pulpit, and give serious instructions to a few of the poor and illiterate, who are not yet arrived to such a pitch of refinement as to think it beneath them to attend their lectures. But who knows how soon they will be forced from this their last retreat? Who knows how soon this jovial and licentious age, will forbid us to mention death and judgment, heaven and hell, even in the pulpit, and confine us to discourse on subjects which have less tendency to alarm

alarm their fears, and make their minds uneasy ? However, as this is not yet the case, let us not neglect to improve the liberty wherewith we are indulged, and in pursuance of our subject, let us, as was proposed in our last discourse,

Secondly, Take a more particular view of the nature and duration of the misery of the wicked, as proved and explained in the preceding Sermon.

1. But here I confess my mind recoils. I feel a sensible reluctance to enter upon the consideration of so dark and dismal a subject ; a subject which yet I believe very necessary to be considered, and not less profitable. For doubtless our Lord, and his Apostles, would never recommend such painful meditations to us, if they were not needful, and calculated to yield us much fruit. To say nothing of their tendency to restrain us from sin and prompt us to duty, to excite us to diligence, and awaken our sleepy souls to watchful care and fearful circumspection ; reflections upon that future and eternal misery, which is reserved for the impenitent and unbelieving sinner, and is the just desert of us all, may be of great use to encrease our patience under all the afflictions and troubles of this life, so light and momentary in comparison of it. And, at the same time, to consider this misery in contrast with that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which is the free gift of God thro' Jesus Christ, will tend to enlarge our conceptions of that great salvation which Christ hath wrought out for us, and, of consequence, to endear the Saviour to us, to whom we owe our redemption from the curse of the law, and our deliverance from the wrath to come.

2. Away then with this reluctance ! with this " foolish, this treacherous compassion," (as the benevolent and meek Doddridge calls it,) " which

“ chuses rather to leave men to be consumed, “ than disturb their slumbers.” Let us seriously address ourselves to the consideration of a subject which, tho’ dreary and unpromising in appearance, is notwithstanding productive of much wholesome fruit. Oh, that it may prove such to us all !—Sorry should I be, by discoursing on this head, only to torment some of you before the time ; and yet, if you seriously attend to what shall be delivered, and after all still resolve to remain in your sins, it cannot be expected to produce any other effect. If, therefore, that is your resolution, if you are not disposed to bid adieu to all iniquity, and give yourselves up to the service of God without reserve, I would advise you to withdraw, and forbear hearing a discourse which, while that is your disposition, can only distress you. Withdraw, however, with this persuasion, that you are *knowingly* and *wilfully* plunging into an abyss of misery, which you have not courage to open your eyes to behold ; and this thought, if I mistake not, will be as a thorn to disturb your beds of indolence and pleasure, and as worm-wood and gall intermixed with your cups of riot and excess ! Oh, that it may after all rouse you from the one, and make you nauseate the other, before you make your bed in hell, and drink the flames of endless torment !

3. In the former discourse upon this subject, in which the text was explained and the doctrine established, it was observed, that the destruction here spoken of, signified, 1st, “ The utter ruin “ of their once holy and happy nature, and the “ final death of all their comforts and their “ hopes ;” and, 2dly, “ the entire perversion of “ all their powers and faculties, which are now “ only employed in dishonouring God, and rendering themselves most compleatly wretched.”

Let

Let us enlarge on these two particulars, and then, as was proposed, 3dly, earnestly address both saints and sinners, on this important subject. And 1st, Their once holy and happy nature is now utterly ruin'd, and all their comforts and hopes finally dead.

1. Indeed their holiness and happiness was in reality lost in this world, tho' not irrecoverably. Even here, where the *true light enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world*, they were unholy and unhappy, depraved by sin and immers'd in misery, but they knew it not. Being laid fast asleep by the opiates of Satan (which are sin) and amused by many pleasing dreams of worldly vanity, invented in great variety to employ and entertain them, they wist not what had befallen them. But intoxicated with the enchanting cup of pleasure, and in the midst of their midnight slumbers, tho' plunged in the filth of iniquity, and fast bound by gigantic lusts, they talked much of the purity of their nature, the freedom of their will, and the light and liberty in which they walk'd.—Tho' the Devil's captives, confin'd by him in the prison of sin, bolted and barr'd by unbelief, and in the territories of hell; yet were they as easy and unconcern'd, as if they imagined themselves to be possess'd of all possible honour and felicity.

2. At times, indeed, the stormy blast of adversity, the painful smart of affliction, or the thunder of God's threatenings, disturb'd their repose, and almost awaken'd their sleepy souls: but another draught of Satan's cup stupifying their senses, and the agreeable song of "Peace, peace" sounding in their ears, lull'd them to sleep again, while sin silently doubled their fetters and chains and unbelief, stopping up every avenue of divine light, added fresh locks and bolts to their prison doors.—And now they sleep more securely, and
F 3 dream

dream more madly than ever.—No sooner do they end one dream than they begin another. Scenes of business and amusement continually open one behind the back of another, that they may not awake out of their fatal slumber, till the officers of divine justice break open their infernal prison, and bring them forth by death for execution, when the time of their probation being ended, the things which make for their peace are for ever hid from their eyes.

3. Then their sleeping and dreaming end together. They suddenly awake to a most keen and dreadful sense of the ruin of their nature, and the final death of all their comforts and their hopes.—They now feel in a manner words cannot describe, from what an height of holiness and happiness, into what a depth of guilt and misery they are fallen.—Destitute of their maker's image, and confounded at the discovery of their nakedness and deformity, they fly from the presence of the light, and the sight of saints and angels, now intolerable; and o'erwhelm'd with shame and everlasting contempt, seek for refuge from the anguish they suffer under the shades of infernal darkness. But alas! the flames of hell, tho' black and dismal, afford light enough to demonstrate their folly and depravity, while the arrows of almighty indignation, prepared by inexorable justice, and directed by unerring wisdom, pursue and overtake them, and piercing them through with unknown sorrows, lay them low at the bottom of that fiery lake, which, fed with streams of brimstone, and blown by the breath of Jehovah, swells, overflows, and torments their ruin'd souls.

4. Their once holy and happy nature is now ruined, utterly and finally ruined, without any remedy, or the most distant hope of recovery. Their frail vessels, tho' built of the best materials,

rials, yet corrupted by the worm of sin, being convey'd by the ebb of time, down the smooth river of life, are now hurried, beyond the bar of death into the fiery and unfathomable sea of divine wrath. In this most tempestuous ocean, tossed by the furious winds of almighty indignation, upon the raging billows of insupportable torment, they suffer a speedy and an eternal shipwreck. Dashed upon the rocks of ruin, or swallowed up in the gulph of despair, they are entirely lost, and not one broken piece of holiness or happiness remains, nor so much as a single plank of hope, upon which they may expect, tho' after millions of ages, to escape to some land of rest. But,

——— “ The hopeless soul,
 “ Bound to the bottom of the flaming pool,
 “ Tho' loath, and ever loud-blaspheming, owns
 “ 'Tis justly doom'd to pour eternal groans;
 “ To talk to fiery tempests, and implore
 “ The raging flame to give it's fury o'er;
 “ To writhe, to toss, to pant beneath its load,
 “ And bear the weight of an offended God.”

And now they have no sleepy opiates to make them forget, for one moment, their misery; no amusement to divert their attention from their intolerable pain, and no consolation left to lighten, in any degree, the dreadful weight of their sufferings!

5. In their most distressing situation here, some alleviating circumstances rendered their affliction tolerable.—Some remaining good, in part relieved them under their greatest losses; some cordial, timely administered, supported them under their severest troubles, and some sympathizing friend, kindly interposing, took a share of their cares upon himself, and helped them to bear the burden of their woe. Or if these things all failed,
 and

and they were reduced to the very extremity of distress, yet even then *hope*, flattering hope, which in this world

“ Springs eternal in the human breast,”

Darting a ray of comfort thro’ the gloom, prevented their case from becoming desperate. But *now* there is the reverse of all this. *All*, *all* is lost, entirely lost, and nothing of good remains! Every possible evil hath befallen them, and with every possible circumstance of aggravation! No condoling friend lightens their load of sorrow! No beam of hope promises any advantageous change! But on the contrary, tormenting fiends and malicious spirits add to their weight of sufferings, by cruel upbraidings, and black despair, hovering over their desponding souls, flaps his raven wings and foretells an eternity of woe! In those

“ Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where joy,
“ Where peace can never come, hope never comes,
“ That comes to all; but torment without end
“ Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed,
“ With ever-burning sulphur unconsum’d.”

But farther (if we have courage to venture further into these dreary territories of the prince of darkness) the destruction spoken of in our text implies,

2dly, The entire perversion of all their *faculties*, so that they serve only to encrease their torment and render them most compleatly wretched. Let us consider them briefly and in order.

1. The *imagination*, freed from every clog, wherewith its motions were once impeded, when it was incumbered by flesh and blood, being now rendered quick and active as a disembodied spirit, is perpetually traversing, with incredible speed and unwearied diligence, the gloomy regions of Hell

in

in quest of woe. And having collected together every consideration of horror, it cloaths them all in the most hideous forms, and thereby keeps the poor, affrighted soul in continual terror and dismay.—The *understanding*, cleared of all the mists of ignorance and fumes of prejudice, where-with it was obscured in this world, and now discerning every thing in its true light, is ever unhappily busied in comparing the joys of heaven with the torments of hell, and contrasting the happiness they have lost, with the misery they have incurr'd. It remonstrates, in terms which wound and pierce their inmost souls, upon their *ingratitude, folly and perverseness*, in rejecting a felicity so valuable in itself, so dearly bought, and so freely and repeatedly offer'd; while in contradiction to reason, to duty, and interest; against the clearest light and the greatest love; notwithstanding the most solemn warnings and earnest intreaties, the exhortations, prayers, tears, and blood of the Son of God himself, they *knowingly and wilfully* plunged into a depth of woe, from whence there is no redemption.

2. In this work of torment, the understanding receives no small assistance from the *memory*, now strengthened to an amazing degree. This faculty brings in review their whole life, and presents to the active mind an endless variety of circumstances, which only tend, like oil pour'd into the fire, to feed the flames of their misery, and make them burn with more unabating fury.—It reminds them, on the one hand, of the many and undeserved mercies of a kind Creator, a patient Preserver and a gracious Redeemer, which might have warmed the coldest breast with fervent gratitude and love, and on the other, of the various and alarming judgements executed by the righteous governor of the world, for the terror of

of evil doers, which might have broken in pieces the most rocky and adamantine heart. But their breasts remained, after all, still cold as ice, and their hearts hard as a nether millstone. It brings to their remembrance the superintending care of a kind and watchful *providence*, which perpetually and wisely ordered all for their good, removed their hindrances, afforded them helps, and put them in the most favourable circumstances for their restoration. But they perversely, by a diabolical skill in spiritual chymistry, extracted a bitter out of every sweet, turned their helps into hindrances and their good into evil!

3. By the help of the memory they recollect the many free and gracious offers of reconciliation which were made them by the Ambassadors of Christ, accompanied with repeated and pressing invitations, to accept those offers and faithful warnings of approaching misery if they neglected them. They remember how all these were, time after time, attended by the influences of the spirit, disposing their minds to consider and improve them. At times they were inclined to comply, and almost persuaded to be Christians, especially when an alarming providence, cut off by a sudden and unexpected stroke, some near relation or dear friend, or laid an heavy hand of affliction upon themselves: But alas! some hurry of idle business occupied their minds, some phantom of empty applause engaged their pursuit, some intoxicating draught of the cup of pleasure, unhappily taken, drowned their convictions, or some frothy company or vain amusement, diverted their attention from the one thing needful! And thus they have for ever lost that *exceeding great and eternal weight of glory*, which they had once so fair an opportunity of attaining, and sunk into an unfathomable depth of woe, out of which there is no deliverance!

4. In

4. In the mean time *conscience* is not idle.
Once indeed

“ She seem’d to sleep
“ On rose and myrtle, lull’d with syren song :
“ Once she seem’d, nodding o’er her charge, to drop
“ On headlong appetite the slacken’d rein,
“ And gave them up to licence unrecall’d.”

But it was all deceit. Even then she registered all their thoughts, and words, and works, and kept a faithful and circumstantial account of their whole conduct. No temper of mind, no action of life escaped her observation ; but

“ The sly informer noted every fault,
“ And her dread diary with horror fill’d :
“ Unnotic’d mark’d each moment misapplied
“ On leaves more durable than those of brass :
“ Wrote their whole history, which now she reads
“ In every pale delinquent’s private ear.”

For being no longer bribed by sin, nor stupified by excess, *conscience* now tells them the truth, the whole truth, and that in accents most dreadfully severe, from which they can no longer turn away their ears.

5. They are now obliged to hearken, however reluctant, to the tormenting history which *conscience* minutely gives them, of the sabbaths they have broken, the ordinances they have profaned, the oaths they have sworn, the lies they have told, the acts of uncleanness, intemperance, fraud, and oppression they have committed, the mercies they have abused, the judgements they have slighted. She gives them a particular detail of all the instances of their ingratitude and disobedience to him, who was at once their most indulgent parent and bountiful benefactor ; and enlarges much upon their *hypocrisy* before an heart-searching

searching God, their formality in the worship of him who is a Spirit, and their lukewarmness in the pursuit of immortal honour and eternal gain. In short, this long-neglected, and now implacably revengeful power, perpetually holds out to their view the glass of God's holy law, which confounds and torments them with the discovery of their filthiness and deformity. Look which way they will their sins, the children of their folly, summoned by *conscience*, in all their number and aggravations, drest in the most frightful forms, and armed with the most dreadful instruments of torture, stare them in the face with looks of vengeance, and fly upon them with insatiably fury. Thus like an infernal fiend, she lashes their souls with whips and scorpions, while as a worm she gnaws and consumes their inwards, or like an hungry vulture preys upon and devours their undecaying vitals.

6. And if the *rational* faculties, the most noble of our nature, are thus busy in executing upon them the indignation and wrath of an offended God, for their depravation and abuse of those faculties, surely the inferior powers, which are but servants to the superior, will not be suffered to remain unemployed.—The *passions* have a considerable share in this work of vengeance assigned them, and that justly, for they bear a chief part in soliciting man to sin. Indeed, some of the passions, which imply happiness in their very nature, such as *esteem*, and *hope*, and *joy*, never visit these dreary regions, but take up their abode in purer climes, and under the influence of a milder sky. But all those which sin hath debauched and made pregnant with woe, are banished to these inhospitable realms, far from the dwellings of light and liberty, where they are continually employed in digging deep into mines

of misery, and forming of hellish metal instruments of punishment, wherewith to torture damned spirits.

7. Thus those unhappy creatures feel insatiable *desires* after objects infinitely and eternally removed from them, while to objects ever present and before them, they have an infinite *hatred* and an unconquerable *aversion*. A deluge of remediless *sorrow* perpetually overwhelms them on account of the torment they already suffer; but as if they suffered nothing in comparison of what was yet to come, they are ever terrified with the most dreadful *fear* of unknown waves of woe, which they see continually rising in tremendous mountains, one behind another, and ready to burst upon their hopeless soul with a fresh flood of affliction!

8. And, ah! what they suffer from the mortification of their *pride*, and the everlasting shame and contempt wherewith they are loaded! Proud as Lucifer, they deem themselves worthy of the highest dignity, when behold! they are sunk to the lowest point of degradation, and only noticed to be hissed and despised. Hence they fret, rave, and tear; they swell with resentment and rage towards God and one another. The rancour which boils in their breasts vents itself in revengeful looks, horrid imprecations, and impotent efforts of disappointed cruelty. *Discontent*, restless and impatient; *anger*, loud and boisterous; *envy*, pale and ghastly; *malice*, implacable and fierce: In short, all the passions (capable of misery) like so many dogs of hell, let loose and enraged, at the beck of the prince of darkness and his malicious crew, with infernal howlings and barking rage, surround, attack, and rend their wretched souls, crying out for help in vain, with piteous wailings and loud laments! Such is

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“Woe's,

" Woe's wide empire, where deep troubles toss,
 " Loud sorrows howl, invenom'd passions bite;
 " Rav'nous calamities their vitals seize,
 " And threat'ning fate wide opens to devour."

9. What hath hitherto been said, refers only to the misery arising from the abused and corrupted faculties of their *souls*; but I must not forget to mention, on this occasion, the sufferings peculiar to the *bodies*, wherewith the wicked will be punished at the morning of the resurrection.—And here, to say nothing of that fiery lake, to the bottom of which they will be chained by despised mercy, converted into inexorable wrath, and which surrounds their whole body with its scorching flames, and insinuates itself *like water into their bowels, and like oil into their bones*: All their *senses*, which were formerly excitements to lust and inlets to sin, together with all their *members*, employed on earth as instruments of iniquity, are now, by the appointment of infinite justice, become inlets to misery and instruments of punishment. Their *eyes*, accustomed to behold scenes of pleasure and objects of delight, are now terrified with the sight of hideous forms and frightful shapes. Their *ears*, wont to be entertained with wanton songs and melodious music, are now shocked with doleful groans, lamentable shrieks, and horrible howlings. Their *nostrils*, formerly revived with fragrant odours and rich perfumes, are now offended with the intolerable stench of sulphur and rottenness, while their *taste*, used to be regaled with the most generous wines and richest dainties, is now tormented with the nauseousness of brimstone and putrefaction. In the mean time, their *hands*, their *feet*, their *heads*, their *hearts*, their whole body, in short, with all its members, shares in the woe,

and

and contributes to the punishment of these miserable wretches. Thus

“ All those powers heaven gave them to supply
 “ Their soul with pleasure, and bring in their joy,
 “ Rise up in arms, against them join the foe,
 “ Sense, reason, memory, encrease their woe;
 “ And there their voice, ordain'd on hymns to dwell,
 “ Corrupts to groans, and blows the flames of hell;
 “ There they must look with terror on their gain,
 “ And with existence only measure pain.”

10. Such is the destruction wherewith Christ, when he cometh, will recompense those who know not God and obey not the gospel, I mean, this is a faint *picture* of it. For as to their misery itself, so far have I been, while attempting to describe it, from dipping my pencil in too deep colours, that the whole creation affords none deep enough to represent a thousandth part of its greatness. For as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those who love him*; so the same may we affirm concerning the torments reserved for those who hate him. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive these*: our most enlarged conceptions fall infinitely short of them. However, we see enough of them (one would suppose) to awaken our fear, and arm our souls with watchful care to avoid them.

11. This is the end I have had in view, in discoursing on this disagreeable subject. I mean hereby, thro' the grace of God, to prevent your ever sharing these unknown sufferings and proving, to your eternal sorrow, how infinitely my description falls short of their reality. And that I may not miss my aim, I beg leave to address you a moment by way of application and improvement, before I conclude.—Indeed, there is the

more necessity of doing this, not only lest Satan (who is never wanting to seek occasion against us) should render this bitter medicine ineffectual, intermixing it with counter-working ingredients of his own, and so should defeat the salutary purpose intended in administering it; but likewise, lest he should turn it into downright poison. For be assured, *ye that know not God, and obey not the gospel*, if what has been advanced is not instrumental in bringing you to repentance, it must tend to harden you in sin, and fit you as a *vessel of wrath*, for containing a greater degree of this misery. If it is not a *savour of life unto life*, it must be a *savour of death unto death*, to you.

I. Let me then, Iſt, exhort you, whoever you are, to enquire ere yet it be too late, whether you are exposed to this *eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord*. Doubtless, you are (if the oracles of divine truth are to be credited) while *you know not God and obey not the gospel*; while this is the state of your souls, you are perpetually liable to all the unknown and unfathomable horrors of eternal misery. Yes, this great gulph which Christ and his apostles have unveiled to your view, and advised you to cast a look towards, before you plunge headlong into it, where there is

“Darkness on darkness, hell

“On hell, where torments behind torments dwell.”

This abyſs of misery, beneath your very feet as it were,

“Expands its jaws how dreadful to survey!

“And roars outrageous for its destin’d prey.”

Ah, my friends! be not so childish as to think the bare shutting your eyes against its dismal gloom, pierc’d with shafted light’ning, and streak’d with spiry flames, will make it cease to exist, prevent
your

your falling into its depth of horrors, or render it in any degree the more tolerable. As well might you think to extinguish the sun by closing your eyes, or to avoid a cannon ball by looking another way. You may indeed turn away your sight from this perdition, fix your attention on some more agreeable subject, and so avoid the present pain which such reflections might produce. But alas ! you will gain little by this ; for to shun the consideration of this misery now is the way to continue in sin and suffer it eternally hereafter.

2. And wilt thou then shut thine eyes and leap wilfully and obstinately into ruin ? Ah sinner, think what thou dost ! And hast thou then counted the cost ? Canst thou indeed bear this devouring fire which yet will not consume thee ? Canst thou dwell with these everlasting burnings, for which thou wilt be the everlasting fuel, where

“ Thy torment must transcend

“ The reach of time, despair a distant end,

“ With dreadful growth shoot forward and arise

“ Where thought can't follow and bold fancy dies.”

Poor unhappy wretch ! how infatuated must thou be !—If thy mind was not totally blinded by the God of this world, and thy very senses drench'd in sensuality, and stupified by the opiates of sin, if thou hadst any power of discerning or feeling left, I would ask thee how thou couldst bear to be suddenly stript of all thy earthly possessions, totally deserted of all thy friends, arrested by merciless creditors, confined in a dark dungeon, loaded with heavy irons ; and in this condition, starving with hunger and cold, and destitute of every necessary accommodation and attendance, to be visited with torturing pain or some loathsome disease ? Sure thou hast love enough for thy money, thy credit, thy friends, thy liberty, thy health, and in fine, thy life, to see that all
these

these calamities befalling thee at once, would be indeed intolerable, to *thee* (at least) who hast no interest in God and heaven. But surely thou dost not think that all these calamities put together, and ten thousand times more and greater, can give an adequate representation of that doleful place, which *infinite wisdom* hath contrived, *almighty power* prepared, and *inexorable justice* destin'd for the punishment of incorrigible transgressors?

3. Believe me, all the evils thou hast ever beheld with thine eyes, heard with thine ears, or conceived in thy heart, nay, all that thou couldst ever conceive, if thou wast to spend an eternity in doing nothing else, but devising forms of woe and changes of misery, if all collected together and appointed to befall thy wretched self in one moment of time, would not furnish thee with an adequate idea of that future and everlasting ruin, in which (if thy speedy repentance prevent not) thou must, ere long, lift up thy ghastly eyes, begging in vain for a drop of water to cool thy tongue, ~~because thou wilt be tormented in that flame.~~— And then, Eternity! Eternity! ah, to spend a never-ending eternity in such anguish! To be “ages and ages, and succeeding still new ages,” weltering in that lake of fire, burning with brimstone, and after millions of ages are past and gone, still to have the wretched consolation of thinking that thy misery is no nearer an end, but all, as it were, to begin again! Ah! who can bear even to think of this! The very thought of such woe is enough to make one's blood run chill, and fill one's soul with horror! It is enough to make one's head giddy with fear, to look down that dark and fiery pit into which poor sinners are perpetually plunging, blinded and insensible, till the penetrating fire make them *feel*, and the glaring flames

flames of Tophet open their eyes to behold themselves undone for ever !

4. Ah ! flee, sinner ! flee from this wrath to come !—But stay, and first falling down on thy knees, solemnly praise God, that it is not yet too late. Thank him from thy inmost soul, that he has not yet cut thee down, and assigned thee thy portion in this place of torment ! Bless the riches of that goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, which have so long permitted thee to live, and waited to lead thee to true repentance ! But oh ! dare not, at the peril of thy soul, tempt it any longer !—Do not persist to provoke that fierce and almighty wrath which thy sins have already kindled against thee, and which (had not the precious blood of Christ been pour'd upon the flame) would long, ere now, have utterly consum'd thy unholy soul, and made thee a monument of vengeance to others ! Do not, I say, persist to provoke an angry God, lest Christ should cease to interpose, and his fiery indignation should, in an instant, blast all thy hopes, and devour thee as his adversary ! Oh ! beware ! after thy hardness and impenitent heart, of treasuring up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God ! Consider how many years the Lord Christ has already interceded for thy barren soul, *Let him alone this year also.* But alas ! hitherto he has prevailed in vain for thy reprieve, for to this day thou hast borne no good fruit. Still, still thou art only a cumberer of the ground ! And who knows whether he has not already put up the last prayer for thee, and commissioned me by these terrors of the almighty, to dig for the last time about thy roots !—If thou bearest fruit it is well, but if not, if even this earthquake of God's judgements do not shake thee ; if after this Christ
come

some seeking fruit on thee and find none, what remains but that he say, *Let no fruit grow on thee from henceforth and for ever, or, Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.*

5. Therefore, delay no longer, but while thy glass of time is not yet run out; while the sun of divine love is not yet gone down upon thee; while the long-suffering of God the Father still waits to be gracious; while the compassionate friend of sinners still intercedes for thee; while the ever-blessed Spirit is not yet provoked to bid thee an eternal adieu, but still continues to strive with thee;—in short, while there is yet any hope concerning thee among the blessed inhabitants of heaven, that thou mayest, after all, be saved; or any fear concerning thee, among the fiends of Hell, lest after all thou shouldest escape that place of torment; before the door of salvation is for ever shut against thee, before yawning Tophet has devoured and closed its mouth upon thee.—Flee, sinner! flee; at the peril of thy soul, flee!—But whence and whither shalt thou flee? Flee from thy sins, thy lukewarmness, thy unbelief; flee to Calvary, to the Cross, to Jesus; flee to the fountain opened in his side, to the blood and water which issue thence, and arise, wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Apply by faith his blood, his merit, to thy guilty conscience; receive by faith the sanctifying graces of his spirit. Embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. Let thy conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. Thus believe, and shew thy faith by thy works, and as sure as he is the resurrection and the life, so sure tho' thou wast dead, yet shalt thou live, and living and believing in him shalt not die eternally.

F I N I S .



